

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15  
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 0833

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PBOR, PEPR, IS, JO, LE, PLO  
SUBJECT: PLO STAR RISES ON THE WEST BANK

1. SUMMARY: THE PLO'S STUBBORN RESISTANCE IN SOUTH LEBANON HAS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED ITS STANDING ON THE WEST BANK WHATEVER ITS IMAGE MAY BE ELSEWHERE. AT THE SAME TIME, THE ARAB STATES, PARTICULARLY "STEADFAST ONES," ARE BEING CASTIGATED FOR THE TIMIDITY AND APPARENT IMPOTENCE. THE U.S. IS BLAMED AS ISRAEL'S ARMS SUPPLIER, BUT THIS IS AN OLD DISAPPOINTMENT. SO FAR, THERE IS LITTLE CREDIT FOR SC RESOLUTION 425 BECAUSE PALESTINIANS DOUBT THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL ACTUALLY WITHDRAW AND FEAR RESTRICTIONS ON FEDAYEEN ACTIVITY. WHATEVER THE FINAL BATTLEFIELD VERDICT, THE PLO HAS WON A POLITICAL VICTORY HERE. END SUMMARY.

2. WEST BANK PALESTINIANS HAVE FOLLOWED EVENTS IN SOUTH LEBANON WITH INTENSE INTEREST. ISRAELI ACCOUNTS OF A RELATIVELY EASY IDF VICTORY HAVE BEEN DISCOUNTED.  
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INSTEAD, THE ARABIC PRESS, HOBbled BY CENSORSHIP, HAS RELIED UPON WIRE SERVICE ITEMS TO PAINT A PICTURE OF HEROIC PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE AND PAINFUL ISRAELI LOSSES A LA KARAME (1970). EVEN MORE PALESTINIANS, ESPECIALLY IN THE VILLAGES, HAVE SIMPLY TUNED IN THE VOICE OF PALESTINE.

3. FEDAYEEN HEROISM. WHILE EVEN FRIENDLY ACCOUNTS

ARE HEARD SKEPTICALLY, THE UNDENIABLE FACT FOR WEST BANKERS, ACCORDING TO HALHUL MAYOR MULHIM, REMAINS THAT THE FEDAYEEN WERE STILL RESISTING AND, MOREOVER, ABLE TO SHELL ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE GALILEE AFTER BEARING THE FULL BRUNT OF THE IDF FOR SIX DAYS. TERRITORY LOST IS, AFTER ALL, LEBANESE TERRITORY. ARMS CAN BE RE-SUPPLIED. AND, AS A LOCAL EDUCATOR COMMENTED ON ARAB MOTHERS' DAY MARCH 21, PALESTINIAN MOTHERS WILL INSURE THE DEAD ARE REPLACED AS WELL. SOMEWHAT EMBARRASSED BY THEIR OWN RELATIVE SAFETY AND COMFORT, WEST BANK PALESTINIANS ARE IMPRESSED AS MUCH BY THE SACRIFICES OF THE FEYADEEN AS BY THEIR RELATIVE SUCCESS.

4. ARAB STATES. IN SHARP CONTRAST, THE ARAB STATES SEEM IDLE AND IMPOTENT. THE DISTINCTION IN ARAB EDITORIALS MARCH 22 WAS NOT BETWEEN CAPITULATIONISTS (EGYPT) AND THE STEADFAST (SYRIA, IRAQ, ALGERIA, ETC.), RATHER BETWEEN "THE ARAB MASSES" AND "THE ARAB REGIMES." NO EVIDENCE IS ASKED FOR THIS REHETORICAL FAITH IN THE MASSES, BUT DEMONSTRATIONS IN JORDAN ARE CITED BY POLITICIANS SUCH AS MULHIM AS PROOF THAT THE ALLEGEDLY UNREPRESENTATIVE ARAB REGIMES CANNOT INDEFINITELY IGNORE THE POPULAR WILL. ANTI-PALESTINIAN POPULAR SENTIMENT AS IN CONFIDENTIAL

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EGYPT IS CONVENIENTLY FORGOTTEN.

5. U.S. POLICY. PREDICTABLY, THE U.S. IS SCORED FOR PROVIDING THE ISRAELI "AGGRESSOR" WITH ARMS. POLOFF WAS TREATED TO A BLISTERING ATTACK MARCH 20 IN A MEETING IN RAMALLAH INCLUDING WEST BANK ACTIVISTS AND STUDENTS ARRESTED AND CHARGED SAME DAY WITH DEMONSTRATING. BUT THIS IS A LONGSTANDING DISAPPOINTMENT. A MORE FUNDAMENTAL COMPLAINT, AS CITED BY "AL FAJR" MARCH 22, IS THAT THE U.S. HAS FAILED IN ITS PEACE EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE CORE PROBLEM, I.E. THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE WHO, BY GENERAL WEST BANK CONSENSUS, ARE REPRESENTED BY THE PLO NOW MORE THAN EVER.

6. RESOLUTION 425. THE LOCAL PRESS HAS SUGGESTED THAT SC RESOLUTION 425 WILL BE HISTORIC, BUT THE U.S. RECEIVES NO CREDIT FOR ITS ROLE. PERHAPS THAT WILL CHANGE IF THE IDF ACTUALLY WITHDRAWS. STILL MANY PALESTINIANS HERE HAVE RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE UN FORCE WHICH IS SEEN AS PROTECTING ISRAEL FROM THE FEDAYEEN RATHER THAN AN ARAB STATE FROM ISRAEL.

7. PEACE PROCESS. EVEN BEFORE SOUTH LEBANON, WEST BANK PALESTINIANS HAD BEEN DISCOURAGED FROM PARTICIPATION IN THE PEACE PROCESS BECAUSE OF ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE (AS HIKMAT AL MASRI STRESSED TO US MARCH 15) AND PLO INTIMIDATION (AS BETHLEHEM'S MAYOR FREIJ STRESSED THE WEEK BEFORE.) NOW, WITH THE PLO STAR AGAIN RISING, THE CHANCES THAT "MODERATE PALESTINIANS" WILL PARTICIPATE IN NEGOTIATIONS ARE MORE REMOTE. THE WEST BANK'S POLITICAL MOODS ARE MERCURIAL, BUT, FOR SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE, THE PLO'S PROLONGED RESISTANCE IN SOUTH LEBANON WILL BE A DECISIVE FACTOR IN ITS FAVOR.

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8. A RELIABLE LONG-TIME OBSERVER OF THE WEST BANK IN A SEPARATE CONVERSATION COMMENTED THAT THE THING THAT HAS UPSET WEST BANKERS THE MOST HAS BEEN SYRIA'S GLARING FAILURE TO COME TO THE AID OF THE PALESTINIANS. NEWLIN

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## Message Attributes

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